



# News Release

**For immediate release:** October 14, 2015

(15-178)

Contacts: [Sharon Moysiuk](#), Communications Office  
[Kate Lynch](#), Communications Office

360-236-4074  
360-236-3259

## **Puget Sound shellfish areas reopen as progress is made to reduce pollution**

*More than 1,000 acres deemed safe for harvesting*

**OLYMPIA** -- More than 1,000 acres of shellfish harvesting areas in Washington have reopened due to improved water quality from efforts to find and fix sources of pollution, modifications in wastewater treatment and collection systems, and continued inspections of private septic systems.

“Adding acres where shellfish can be safely harvested shows that our pollution-reduction efforts are working,” said Maryanne Guichard, assistant secretary for the Division of Environmental Public Health. “This progress wouldn’t be possible without our local, state, and tribal partners, along with the communities in shellfish growing areas, who deserve all the credit for finding and correcting pollution problems.”

Some of the recent successes include Ketron Island in Pierce County and Poverty Bay in King County. However, the most notable upgrade is the opening of more than 700 acres of shellfish harvest area in Clallam County’s Dungeness Bay. Government and tribal partners have been working with community members and property owners to find and fix pollution sources for more than a decade.

While this progress is encouraging, recent tests show that water quality has worsened in small parts of some growing areas in Mason and Pierce counties. In addition, about 500 acres of Portage Bay in Whatcom County was downgraded earlier this year due to poor water quality. Tests show the area is being impacted by polluted runoff from the Nooksack River.

The Department of Health and its partners work to maintain and improve water quality throughout the Puget Sound and coastal shellfish harvesting areas. All downgrades impact shellfish harvesters and people who eat shellfish from the area. More work needs be done to

identify and correct sources of pollution in these areas. Funding for these efforts comes from Washington State, and the Environmental Protection Agency's National Estuary Program. Puget Sound counties have received more than \$15 million to reduce fecal pollution since 2012. The department expects to continue to provide funds to support the work happening throughout Puget Sound.

Water testing done by the department became one of the measures used to calculate the status of water quality in Puget Sound in 2007. Since then, there's been a net increase of 3,813 acres of shellfish areas upgraded. These changes are tracked by the Puget Sound Partnership's Vital Signs indicators and Governor Inslee's Results Washington process, which have a goal of increasing the number of harvestable shellfish acres by 10,800 acres by 2020.

The goal of the Shellfish Program from the Department of Health's Office of Environmental Health and Safety is to make sure that shellfish from the waters of our state are safe to eat. It uses national water quality standards to classify commercial shellfish harvesting areas in Washington.

The [Department of Health website](http://doh.wa.gov) (doh.wa.gov) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. Also, [find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).

###